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ABSTRACT

Designed for state vocational education Research Coordinating Units (RCU) personnel who manage dissemination programs, this guide offers suggestions for sharing dissemination responsibility with other state programs. The guide examines the possibilities of integrating activities in a horizontal dimension, i.e., across state educational agency components. Likely advantages of this approach, as mentioned by the authors, include wider exposure of available services and more resources available, including a broad range of data and expertise. Economy of scale and greater organizational efficiency are also foreseen. Sections of the guide (1) trace vocational education dissemination research and efforts to date, as well as state, regional and national programs: (2) discuss principles of cooperation: (3) list steps for implementation that emphasize mutual benefits to be obtained: and (4) provide expected outcomes that result from cooperation and resource sharing. Some references for further study are included. (CP)

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SHARING DISSEMINATION RESPONSIBILITIES

A Guide for Articulating Vocational Education Dissemination Programs

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FOREWORD

The Educational Amendments of 1976 (P.L. 94-482) call for imaginative program improvement in vocational education to make it more responsive to the needs of special populations and the need for sex equity. State vocational education research coordinating unit (RCU) directors and others interested in the management of dissemination will find that this guide contains suggestions for improving vocational education programs by articulating the services of various state and regional dissemination services. Some principles of cooperation provide the basis for linking vocational education dissemination activities with these other services. Implementation steps are suggested and outlined.

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INTRODUCTION

This guide was prepared for state vocational education research coordinating unit (RCU) personnel who manage dissemination programs. It provides suggestions for sharing dissemination responsibilities with other state dissemination programs. While dissemination tends to operate up and down a *vertical* dimension in sensing local needs and providing services, this guide examines the possibilities of integrating activities on a *horizontal* dimension; that is, articulation of dissemination programs across state education agency (SEA) components.

There are many reasons why managers of vocational education programs should be interested in sharing dissemination responsibilities with others. An articulated program of dissemination could provide benefits not otherwise possible, including—

1. wider exposure of available services, thus, *more vocational educators served,*
2. more available resources thus *faster service* to vocational educators,
3. a *broader range* of available data bases and technical expertise, therefore, services of *superior quality,*
4. economy of scale permitting development of services, thus a *broader range of services,*
5. greater organizational efficiency, thus *lower unit costs* for services.

The scarcity of resources and the increased need for program improvement are compelling reasons to seek these benefits. The increased interaction between managers of separate dissemination programs is likely to stimulate professional leadership for this area of endeavor.

The following sections provide a brief background of vocational education dissemination, descriptions of other dissemination programs, principles of cooperation, and steps for implementation.

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION: A STEP AHEAD

Vocational education took some of the earliest steps to build an effective dissemination system. This early leadership is evident and has been recognized. The time has come to share responsibilities with other programs.

Background

As early as 1967, state vocational education research coordinating units (RCUs), in collaboration with The Center for Vocational Education and its associated ERIC Clearinghouse, began to disseminate information to vocational education practitioners. The Center, working with groups of state research coordinating unit (RCU) directors, developed a guide to state information dissemination systems (Taylor and Magisos 1971), conducted a seven-state pilot program based on the guide, surveyed the target audiences for information dissemination (Magisos 1971), and provided training on information dissemination to RCU personnel in twenty-six states. Several states developed exemplary dissemination programs which complemented the ongoing state and federally-administered programs of research, demonstration and curriculum development being supported under the federal vocational education legislation.

Concurrent with these developments in vocational education, several educational dissemination programs were being developed under sponsorship of the U.S. Office of Education (USOE) and the National Institute of Education (NIE). As these programs matured, a need to coordinate activities among the programs became apparent. The descriptions provided later in this section indicate how these programs can complement each other as resources to vocational education.

The latest vocational education legislation (P.L. 94-482) enables the development of a comprehensive program improvement system for vocational education. It includes the authorization of a National Center for Research in Vocational Education which has six broad functions: (1) applied R&D, (2) leadership development, (3) dissemination and utilization, (4) information for policy and planning, (5) clearinghouse, and (6) evaluation services. The legislation authorizes other programs of national significance at the USOE Commissioner's discretion and consolidates state program improvement activities (e.g., research, exemplary program demonstration, curriculum development, dissemination, etc.) under the RCUs. The vertical articulation of the dissemination

activities of the National Center, state RCUs, and the regional curriculum coordination centers is underway and is becoming known as a nationwide network of dissemination collaborators. As state RCUs consolidate the broader responsibilities for program improvement as outlined in the legislation, they will be able to draw on this vertical configuration for the combined resources of the network.

But what of the other educational dissemination programs in the states? What are they? What regional and national dissemination resources can be drawn upon? The following sections provide a general description of these programs.

State Dissemination Programs

There usually are a few state supported dissemination programs and information resources, such as the state library. In addition, there may be branches of a variety of federal or state-supported specialized dissemination activities for programs such as special education, community education, etc. The descriptions here are limited to two general, federally supported efforts which have state components—NIE's state capacity building program and USOE's National Diffusion Network. More detail on these and other dissemination programs are provided in three directories listed in "References for Further Study" on page 17.

State Capacity Building programs are funded under the State Dissemination Program by NIE. The program is designed to support activities in SEAs that develop the capability or readiness of a state education agency (SEA) to coordinate dissemination activities, and provide information and technical assistance to educators. Forty-one states are participating members with two types of awards being made: Capacity Building Grants to support comprehensive and generalized state education agency dissemination capacity and Special Purpose Grants to deal with specific dissemination problems. An RCU could profit from articulating with the state capacity building program, where it exists. For example, an ERIC microfiche collection and computer search capacity could be shared. User training could be jointly conducted and activities could be announced cooperatively.

The *National Diffusion Network* (NDN), established in 1974, is sponsored by USOE to provide information and services to local educational agencies in effecting program improvement by adopting or adapting exemplary educational programs approved by the Joint Dissemination Review Panel (JDRP). Network members include State

Facilitators in SEAs and Developer/Demonstration projects located in local school districts with preschool through secondary agencies and educators as the target audience. RCU personnel should become familiar with the JDRP-approved programs, nationally; the Developer/Demonstrator projects in their own state; and the services provided by the State Facilitator. There are a number of ways that cooperative activities could be undertaken. For example, an RCU could help its own contractors gain JDRP approval and obtain a Developer/Demonstration grant for products developed under RCU support. Vocational educators could be referred by the RCU to the State Facilitator for assistance in adopting NDN supported products.

Regional and National Dissemination Programs

Although the focus of this guide is upon the horizontal articulation of state dissemination programs, there are several federally-supported efforts which may have regional components which serve a state or have branches in a state. More detail on the following is provided in the directories cited in the references later.

The *Research and Development Exchange* (RDx), supported by NIE, was established in 1976 to assist state, intermediate, and local educational agencies in obtaining documents and data, and provide an information exchange forum on pertinent target audience needs. Network members are the seven Regional Exchanges and four central service contractors which serve state education agencies, intermediate service units, and local education agencies. Assistance can be obtained in solving educational problems from the appropriate *Regional Exchange* located in a regional educational laboratory. When necessary, the Regional Exchange will seek assistance in identifying organizational resources from the *Resource and Referral Service* at the National Center for Research in Vocational Education.

ERIC, the *Educational Resources Information Center*, has been in existence since 1964 under the auspices of USOE and later NIE. It consists of sixteen decentralized clearinghouses that collect, screen, organize, and disseminate reports of fugitive materials (i.e., materials not available through trade and/or commercial publishers) related to education. They also prepare interpretative summaries and state-of-the-art reviews of selected topic areas. Through a central processing agency, it publishes *Resources in Education* (RIE) the printed catalog of materials input by each clearinghouse and *Current Index to Journals in Education* (CIJE). Vocational educators most frequently will relate to the *ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and*

Vocational Education at the National Center. However, there are many ways in which an RCU could cooperate with other clearinghouses if they happen to be located in the same state. For example, user training could be jointly sponsored by the RCU and a clearinghouse. Also, RCU personnel should be familiar with the various ERIC standing order microfiche collection holders and machine search vendors operating within their own state. These holders and vendors can provide efficient, nearby service to vocational educators. RCUs should be facilitating the submission to ERIC of all vocational education materials developed within their own state.

These linkages to other dissemination programs can improve services to users by making operations more cost effective. Bringing about restructuring of dissemination services within a state education agency is difficult and time consuming. The next section of this guide suggests some "principles of cooperation" for increasing the effectiveness of state dissemination programs.

PRINCIPLES OF COOPERATION

Cooperation between agencies must be based upon sound principles because the mission and activities of most agencies differ. Some of the principles listed below will be helpful in establishing and maintaining cooperative relationships.

1. Agencies which depend upon each other for resources are most likely to cooperate. Dissemination of information and materials is an important function within a state education agency (SEA). It requires articulation of tasks along a *vertical* dimension from the SEA to local education agencies. Likewise, operational efficiency requires articulation of tasks across agencies, a *horizontal* dimension of the organization.

2. Goals must be recognized as mutually supportive by each cooperating agency. The clarification of and agreement on organizational boundaries is essential to productive, cooperative relationships among dissemination agencies. Clear procedures for serving clientele should be based on (1) written agency goals and (2) agreed upon jurisdictional boundaries.

3. Shared goals tend to foster cooperation. Common interests and concerns tend to promote positive feelings of identification among agency personnel. Expressed needs of clients frequently cut across agency boundaries. Vocational educators should strive to identify needs and objectives which they have in common with other agencies.

4. Potential for cooperation among agency personnel increases as the frequency and quality of communications increase. Joint activities, such as meetings of teachers in an educational specialty to discuss information services available to them, represent opportunities for communication. Careful preparation of agenda items and clear assignments for the meetings help to assure positive communications at meetings.

5. As agency cooperation increases, transactions should become formalized and routine. Agencies sharing resources such as staff time or funds are likely to have agreements governing the use of such resources. High frequency interactions among agencies such as the exchange of funds are likely to require standard forms which can be processed with a minimum of individualized attention.

6. Open, nonprescriptive interaction between provider and user will increase when the interaction is perceived to be sanctioned. Requests for information and materials *from* teachers and others at the local level should be encouraged. State level agencies should cooperate in encouraging the free-flow of ideas and service *to* local educators by state education agency personnel.

7. Control of dissemination activities in a state by one group may be counterproductive. While work efficiency may be improved by centralized control, substantive expertise and educational program purpose can be lost. The credibility of service will be improved by an articulation of appropriate agency programs, taking advantage of generalized system efficiency and specialized program effectiveness.

8. Generalized dissemination centers are better able to access mutliple resources which meet program improvement needs. Generalized dissemination centers usually can best specialize in searching data bases and providing information to specialized information networks. This service should be accessible to and supported by specialized dissemination programs.

9. Specialized dissemination centers are better able to interpret problems of clients and to provide technical assistance. Vocational education dissemination specialists are best qualified to understand program requests. Likewise, these specialists can best provide technical assistance with information or materials provided to requestors.

10. Program improvement needs should be resolved by the unit of government closest to the location of the need. The time required to process an information request and/or respond to an inquiry is directly related to the proximity of the dissemination center to the local need. However, the adequacy of the solution for the need should be determined. More often than not, the local dissemination unit will turn to an intermediate or state level unit for help in searching for problem solutions. This principle has many implications for deployment of vocational education dissemination specialists to levels of government between local school districts and state education agencies.

11. Successful articulation of agency problems is likely to occur when plans are exchanged as they are developed incrementally. The departments and bureaus within a state education agency often have interagency agreements or earlier interactions.

Therefore, the implementation schedule for cooperative relationships should contain ample time for incremental adjustments in operations. This is particularly true when programs are sponsored by federal agencies or other organizations outside of the state. Major changes will take time, in any case.

These principles of cooperation provide the basis for articulating dissemination programs. Tangible steps of implementation are needed to link to other programs.

STEPS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

The eventual achievement of an articulated program of dissemination which can make a further contribution to vocational education program improvement will be more likely if the principles of cooperation in the previous section are used. However, the purposeful development of an articulated program will be achieved more expeditiously if the implementation steps below are followed. Because the vocational education program is administered within the SEA, the exploration must start there. This may be followed by the identification of potential key actors, both within and external to the SEA. These and other implementation steps are explained below.

1. Explore the SEA Organization

To develop a picture of dissemination activities in the SEA, one must ask some obvious questions. What are the components of the SEA and what are their missions? What is the governance structure? What SEA components are involved in dissemination? Who controls the resources for dissemination programs? Are these programs achieving their objectives satisfactorily? Could these programs achieve their objectives more satisfactorily in cooperation with other programs?

The examination of this context will provide a starting point for further exploration within the state. It will be only natural if the exploration is done in the spirit of "What is in these programs that will be of benefit to vocational education?" because later, when overtures are made by the RCU, a similar question will be asked by other program managers. It is when *mutual* benefits are discovered that the momentum for cooperation will be gained.

2. Identify Key Actors in Dissemination

It is important to identify the key components within the SEA and in external agencies which could make a contribution to the vocational education dissemination program. Within the SEA there may be a state capacity building or special purpose grant program which provides comprehensive information services for all of education. There may be a State Facilitator project in the USOE-sponsored National Diffusion Network as well as one or more Developer/Demonstrator projects within the state.

The state education agency may be served by a Regional Exchange in the NIE-sponsored Research and Development Exchange (RDx).

It may be that an ERIC Clearinghouse is located in the state and, while it serves a national role in a subject field, it may be able to provide special help because of its proximity. There may be various university libraries, intermediate school districts, or larger city districts which provide computer-assisted information search services and have standing order collections of ERIC microfiche. In addition, there may be dissemination programs related to specialized areas.

Needless to say, some of the aforementioned could serve as key actors in the program improvement plans for vocational education. The efficiencies of *horizontal* integration of these efforts have tremendous advantages.

3. Share Goals

As key actors in dissemination are identified, an exchange of goal statements will provide a basis for communication. Commonality in goals should then be studied. What objectives are being pursued? What audiences are being served? What services are rendered? What resources are available? This study will provide the basis for exploring ways that programs can complement each other, keeping in mind the principles of cooperation listed in the previous section. A few shared goals can be then developed to serve as one basis for agreements.

4. Develop Inter- and Intra-Agency Agreements

It may be necessary to have a considerable amount of interaction with other programs at first, primarily in sharing goals and trying out approaches (e.g., making or accepting referrals, working together on a proposal, "talking shop," etc.). These informal interactions will suffice for a time, but soon it will become desirable to formalize and routinize the basis for cooperative activity in the form of written agreements, established procedures, and standardized forms. The basis for these agreements, procedures, and forms are the common goals, program effectiveness, work efficiencies, and cost benefits.

These agreements, procedures, and forms should provide for—

a. communication and accessibility between appropriate personnel on problems which arise,

b. identification of contact persons for specific tasks to expedite communication,

c. financial accounting procedures which meet all contractual and internal requirements,

d. workflows which accommodate the cooperators' needs for communication and records,

e. formative evaluation of progress toward shared goals,

f. data collection or aggregation which can later provide a basis for evaluating progress toward shared goals.

5. Establish an Implementation Schedule

A mutually developed schedule for implementation of the cooperative effort should be established and followed. Frequent review of the schedule by the program managers involved will prevent misunderstandings and the breakdown of an inter- or intra-agency agreement.

6. Share Credit for Accomplishments

When reporting accomplishments effected by cooperating agencies, every effort should be made by the agencies to share the credit. This applies to both formal reports to superiors or sponsors and to the general public and specific clients as well. This should be thought of as doubling the exposure rather than splitting the credit.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Ideally, an articulated dissemination program would have more total impact than the impact of several unarticulated, separate dissemination programs. The efficiency and effectiveness of all programs would be improved because resources could be shared. For example, one microfiche collection could serve more than one program, inservice training sessions could be conducted jointly, a greater range of staff expertise could be available, peak work loads could be spread, and a wider range of resources could be available to clients making one inquiry. Specific outcomes which should be expected include all of the benefits advanced in the "Introduction" earlier.

1. More will be served because of the wider exposure given to the services.

2. Clients will receive faster services with less difficulty because one inquiry will tap more resources.

3. Services will be superior in quality because a broader range of data bases and technical expertise will be available.

4. The range of services will be increased because volume efficiencies will permit development of new services.

5. The unit cost of services will be lower because of greater organizational efficiency.

Most RCU personnel will develop variations to suit the special needs of vocational education in their own state. In most cases, more integation and centralization may occur; in others the programs may find fewer ways to cooperate. But, in every case, the potential must be explored if only to assure that there is no unnecessary overlap or duplication of services from the state education agency. Duplication is not likely to go unnoticed in this period of austerity.

REFERENCES FOR FURTHER STUDY

Listed below are questions which will be asked in the development of an articulated dissemination program. Answers to many of the questions may be found in the cited references.

QUESTION: **Where can I find additional information on resources which are available to state dissemination programs?**

Bina, James V.; Peterson, John C.; and Halasz, Ida Marie. *Databases and Clearinghouse: Information Resources for Education.* Columbus, Ohio: The National Center for Research in Vocational Education, The Ohio State University, 1978.

Consortium of Associations for Education Dissemination. *Private Organizations and Associations: Information Resources for Education.* Arlington, Virginia: Consortium of Associations for Education Dissemination, August 1978.

Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development. *Dissemination Networks: Information Resources for Education.* San Francisco, California: Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development, 1978.

NOTE: All three of the above publications are available from:

Consortium of Associations for Educational Dissemination
1815 North Lynn Street, Suite 1000
Arlington, Virginia 22209
Package Cost—$10.00

QUESTION: **Where can I find information on the conceptual dimensions of dissemination as it relates to State Education Agencies?**

Dissemination Analysis Group. "Educational Dissemination in Relation to Public Elementary and Secondary Schools." From the report of the Dissemination Analysis Group to the Dissemination Policy Council, mimeographed, Washington, D.C.: September 30, 1976.

NTS Research Corporation. *A Framework for the Evaluation of the State Capacity Building Program.* Durham, North Carolina: NTS Research Corporation, May 1978.

Report and Recommendations, Interstate Project on Dissemination. January 1, 1976. ED 125 552.

QUESTION: What other resources were used in developing the concepts in this guide?

Esterline, Bruce H. "Coordination: A Conceptual Model and Practical Consideration." A paper delivered to the Education Commission of the States' National Seminar on State Capacity Building, December 1976. ED 140 460.

Magisos, Joel H. *Interpretation of Target Audience Need in the Design of Information Dissemination Systems for Vocational-Technical Education.* Columbus, Ohio: The Center for Vocational and Technical Education, The Ohio State University, 1971. ED 061 417

An Overview of State Dissemination Activities. Edited by System Support Service of the Research and Development Exchange, San Francisco: Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development, May 1978.

"Statement of Agreement by Professions in the Field of Education." *Educational Researcher,* Vol. 6, No. 10, November 1977, pp. 3-4.

Taylor, Celianna I., and Magisos, Joel H. *Guide for State Vocational-Technical Education Information Dissemination Systems.* Columbus, Ohio: The Center for Vocational and Technical Education, The Ohio State University, 1971. ED 048 503